MDOT Peer Exchange
Focus Areas and Questions

Program Development (Presentations by panel members on day 1)
- How have you transformed your program and what caused you to make this transformation?
- How have you initiated and developed a move in a new direction?
- What obstacles did you face?
- What strategies did you find successful?
- What benefits do you see in managing their program the way they do?
- What challenges do you still face?
- What is your shining star, your most noteworthy program element?

Needs Identification (Roundtable discussion with panel on day 1)

Highest priority questions
- How do you apply your research funds? Who makes these decisions in your organization?
  - State/regional/national projects
  - Short-term vs. long-term projects
  - Construction, policy, safety, operations, ITS, etc. projects
- How does your organization establish/develop its short/long term research strategic objectives?
- To what extent do your research projects align with your department's strategic needs?
- To what extent do you include implementation planning in your project development and funding processes?
- How do you communicate about your processes and programs?

Lower priority questions
- How do you select which projects to fund?
- Who do you go to for research ideas? DOT headquarters staff? Regional staff? Universities? DOT managers? Industry representatives? Others?
- At what time frequency (in terms of years) does your organization perform a formal solicitation for research? What is your rationale for this?
- What process do you follow for generating research ideas?
- To what degree does your organization give consideration to research projects initiated through a University Transportation Center (UTC) and/or a Transportation Pooled Fund solicitation?
- How do you tap research expertise in your state, region and nationally?

University Partnerships (Roundtable discussion with panel on day 1)
- What agreements do you have with your state universities for conducting research projects?
- Do you work only with universities in your state? Do you work only with universities and not consultants?
- How do you make sure you have a win-win working relationship?
- What rationale do you use to leverage (proper balance) program between university contracted research (Federal/State funds), UTC grants (Federal, and State/Local match), and TPF funds (100% Federal).
- What agreements do you have with your state universities for managing your research projects?
- How do you include the universities in your research process?
- What advantages do you see in working with your state universities?
- What challenges have you had in working with the universities?

Research Project Management (Presentations by panel members on day 2)
- Who is responsible for overseeing your research projects?
- Do you handle contracts within your research program or with the help of another office in your department?
- How do you address ownership of the research reports and other products of the projects within your contracts?
- Who within your organization is involved in the technical oversight of the research? How is that person(s) selected? Does your research staff participate in project meetings?
- What software tools do you use to track the lifecycle of your projects?
- To what extent do you standardize the presentation of your final reports? Do you edit them once you receive them from the investigator?
- How do you select which investigator will conduct the research?

Measuring and Reporting Performance (Roundtable discussion with panel on day 2)
- How do you know if your research project was successful? What performance measures do you use? What units of measure are considered for Cost/Benefit ratios?
- How do you define implementation?
- What steps do you take to implement the results of your projects? Is funding available for implementing research? If so, is it considered part of the original research project/contract or under handled under a separate project/contract?
- What is the average project life (yrs.) and cost ($) of your typical research project?
- What steps have you taken to improve on-time completion of your projects?
- How do you report on the results of your projects?